

# The Doctrine of Man

(The Essential Christian Truth About the Fallen Nature of Mankind)



## Who Am I?

From ancient times, philosophers have tried to understand their place within the cosmos. Where does mankind fit within the universe? What is my role in all of this? Am I a good person? Do I matter? The writers of scripture have also asked these important questions, and the answers they discovered are critical to the Christian Worldview. Two of God's greatest warriors had a healthy humility about their own identity and ability. Moses was a true man of God, but he understood his frailty. He understood that he was helpless without God's power:



### Exodus 3:11

*But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?"*

And in a similar manner, David, a warrior and future king, understood that his credentials gave him little reason to boast:



### 1 Samuel 18:18

*But David said to Saul, "Who am I, and what is my life or my father's family in Israel, that I should be the king's son-in-law?"*



### 2 Samuel 7:18

*Then David the king went in and sat before the LORD, and he said, "Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me this far?*

How is it that these two warriors and men of God retained this humble nature? How were they able to maintain such admirable humility? As men of God, they understood their own nature. They understood what we have since come to call, "Christian Anthropology". They understood the Christian 'doctrine of man'...



## So, Are We Good or Bad?

I have a partner at work who is not a Christian. When pondering the possibility of life beyond death, he often says, "If there is a Heaven, I know I will be there, because I am a good person". Have you ever encountered someone who believes this? It is a common claim amongst non-Christians. Many in our world begin with the assumption that people are inherently good. But is this true? Are people, by their very nature, GOOD? Are we born in a position of nobility and righteousness?

Well, let's look at our own personal experience. If you are a parent, you have some empirical evidence from which to draw. You know that you don't have to teach your infant to be selfish, impatient, rude and self-serving. Infants must be TAUGHT to be just the opposite; goodness is not an innate quality of humans. We don't come into the world with this type of disposition. We must be taught how to love, how to think beyond our own needs and desires, how to share and appreciate others. Do you remember that experiment you studied in high school in which monkeys were taken from their mothers and raised without any personal contact,

comfort or love? How did they turn out? They were sociopaths; angry, evil and dangerous. This was, in fact, their base nature. It is what they would be if not TAUGHT to be something different. As a detective and twenty year police officer, I can personally testify that this is also the truth about us as humans. Time and time again I have seen what happens when young men and women are not TAUGHT how to love and how to “be good”. Our base nature is not pretty.



### How Can It Be Explained?

Now, both atheists and theists have to explain the innately fallen nature of humans. Atheists inevitably end up arguing that this nature is the result of a natural process of evolution within the species. But wouldn't the species be better served if all humans were truly and innately “good”. Why hasn't evolution brought the human race to a place where only goodness reigns? How is it that a “God Delusion” is required to restrain our immoral inclinations? Why hasn't evolution already made this correction naturally?

As a Christian Theist, I observe the innate nature of humans and I recognize that we are fallen; we are not good by nature. I see this in the world around me and, if I am honest with myself, I see this in my own nature as well. And I also know where it comes from. Our fallen nature is the result of God's loving and dangerous gift of free will. A loving God would create a world in which love is possible, but this sort of world requires beings to make a free will CHOICE to love, and once this freedom is given to any of us, we also have the possibility of choosing something other than love. We also have the choice to choose to hate. This kind of dangerous freedom allows us the opportunity to choose ‘right’, but the freedom to choose ‘wrong’.

Adam, the first human, created in the image of God, was also allowed this dangerous freedom. We all know the story. He chose to do what was wrong, he chose to ‘sin’. And while I'm sure he made many choices for ‘right’ in the years following his ejection from the Garden, he lived a life that was scarred by a continuing predisposition to choose his own way rather than the ways of God. We, as his children, have inherited this propensity for sin. If we are honest with ourselves, we will find ourselves agreeing with the Biblical assessment of the nature of humans, and this assessment does not cast us in a good light...



### The Truth About Humanity

The scriptures describe humans as rebellious and innately evil. The Biblical description is robust, complete and detailed. It describes human nature as fallen from birth, incapable of true goodness (without God's assistance) and unwilling to seek the face of God. Let's take a look:



#### 1 Our Beginnings Are Not Innocent Enough

From the very start, (from our birth), we are not innocent and inclined toward goodness. Instead, we are born as the offspring of Adam, inclined toward sin:



#### Romans 5:12

*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned*



### 1 Corinthians 15:20-22

For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.

### Psalm 51:5

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.



### Ephesians 2:1-3



d you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.



## Our Natural Condition Is Not Capable Enough

And even as we grow and learn to be good from those who teach and love us, we are still filled with the inclination to do what is wrong. All of us struggle with this if we are honest about it. We are slaves to our inclinations. We have a hidden thought life, and this life exposes who and what we really are. And there are many times when we choose to act on these thoughts. You and I both know this is true. We are not consistently capable of true goodness:



### Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?



### Romans 3:23

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God



### John 8:34

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin



### Job 15:14-16

"What is man, that he should be pure, or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, He puts no trust in His holy ones, and the heavens are not pure in His sight; How much less one who is detestable and corrupt, Man, who drinks iniquity like water!"



## Our Desire Is Not Strong Enough

And we are also not all that interested in the things of God. In our natural state, we are rebellious and our desire for God is weak and fading. We are so fallen, that we don't even recognize or understand spiritual things:



### John 5:40-41

...and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life



### **1 Corinthians 2:14**

*But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*



### **Romans 3:10-18**

*...as it is written,*

*There is none righteous, not even one;  
There is none who understands,  
There is none who seeks for God;  
All have turned aside, together they have become useless;  
There is none who does good,  
There is not even one.  
Their throat is an open grave,  
With their tongues they keep deceiving,  
The poison of asps is under their lips;  
Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness;  
Their feet are swift to shed blood,  
Destruction and misery are in their paths,  
And the path of peace have they not known.  
There is no fear of God before their eyes.*



### **Romans 1:18-19**

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.*



### **Our Lives Are Not Righteous Enough**

And even our 'good deeds' are not all that good. Sure, we may think that we are doing something noble, but there is generally something in it for us; some hidden, self serving motive. And even our best efforts pale by comparison to the standard of righteousness that exists in the God of the Universe.



### **Isaiah 64:6**

*For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.*



### **James 2:10**

*For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.*



### **Galatians 3:10-11**

*For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them." Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "The righteous man shall live by faith."*



### **Romans 3:27-28**

*Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.*

## **5 Our "Goodness" Is Not Our Own**

And in case you think that those moments of compassion or righteousness that you DO occasionally achieve were the result of your own ability or effort, think again. Even our best moments are simply the work of God. On our own we are completely incapable of choosing God or doing anything righteous in the sight of God. When we DO act righteously, it is simply God's Spirit and Word acting within us:



### **John 6:44**

*No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.*



### **John 6:65**

*And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father."*



### **Philippians 2:12-13**

*So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*



### **1 Thessalonians 2:13**

*And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.*



### **Romans 9:16**

*So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.*



### **John 1:12-13**

*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*



## **Bad News and Good News**

The Bible paints a pretty ugly picture of our human nature, doesn't it? It sure sounds like we are lost and wandering, incapable of seeking God and incapable of impressing this God with our own 'good' efforts. It sounds like bad news, and that is exactly what it is! But there is something very special about the Christian message. There is Good News! The God of the universe is not going to judge us on our fallen nature or our inadequate

efforts. Instead, He is going to allow Jesus to pay the price for our sin and save us as an act of GRACE. We may be fallen, but we DO matter to God:



### **Ephesians 2:4-5**

*But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)*



### **Colossians 2:13-15**

*And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*



### **Titus 2:11-12**

*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,*



### **Galatians 2:16**

*...nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.*



### **Titus 3:5-7**

*He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*



## **Does It Really Matter?**

OK, so why is this "Doctrine of Man" so important? What's the big deal here? Why do we even need to understand the Christian position on this issue? Why is a proper understanding of humanity so important to Christian Orthodoxy? Well, if we don't first understand our desperate need, we won't come to understand the power and urgency of the Good News offered by Jesus Christ. If you don't understand your true condition, your fallen nature and inability to do ANYTHING to save yourself, you won't move to seek and find the Savior who has come to give us what we simply can't earn on our own.

Have you ever had a salesman come to your door and try to sell you something that you really don't need? How much time do you give that salesman? How much do you really pay attention to what he is saying? On the other hand, if this man came to your door and offered you something that you desperately needed, you would be quick to usher him in and listen intently to what he had to say! If you are acutely aware of your need, you soon become acutely interested in MEETING that need.

We need a proper understanding of our human nature so that we can have a correct understanding of our spiritual need. And it is this understanding that shapes our love and awe of God, our gratitude for Salvation and our love of the Savior. Without an understanding of

who WE are, we can never truly appreciate who GOD is. For this reason, it's important for us to be honest about our own human nature, and understand what the Bible has to say about it.